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ABSTRACT

A cross-cultural program at a southern university is described. The objective of the program was to enable white students to learn more about black culture by spending a quarter at a predominantly black university, and for students from black institutions to spend a quarter at a predominantly white institution. A model to help orient visiting black students to the University of Florida was developed by three counselors assigned to the students. The purpose of the model was to involve the students in activities in the homes in which they lived during the quarter, the local community and the school itself, beginning the first week of the quarter. This was accomplished by: (1) planning activities every week; (2) assisting the students in meeting new friends; (3) meeting individually with the students regularly; and (4) having each student complete two attitudinal questionnaires bimonthly. Results indicate that the students made an effective adjustment to their role and that the model presented was instrumental in that adjustment.
(Author/HMV)

A PLAN FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS IN A CROSS - CULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
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Beginning in 1971 the Carnegie Corporation of New York sponsored a Cross-Cultural Program at the University of Florida. The objective of the program was to enable white students to learn more about the culture of blacks by spending a quarter at predominately black Florida A&M University and by providing opportunities for students from the four predominately black institutions (Bethune Cookman, Florida A&M, Edward Waters and Florida Memorial) to learn more about white culture by spending one quarter at the University of Florida.

This report shall be concerned with a model that was developed in order to orientate new students to the University of Florida and to assist them in planning and completing individual projects. The fifteen students involved were from Florida A&M University.

It is important for the reader to know that the Childhood Education program at the University is field based. Students work at their own pace in completing activities and there are no formal classes in the professional sequence that students must attend. Students coming from traditional classes could become frustrated the first five weeks they are in the program. Therefore, it was believed that counselors needed to spend more time with these students and their experiences needed more structure. It was upon this belief that the model for helping these new students was developed and implemented.

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During the 1973 spring quarter, a group of fifteen students from Florida A&M University attended the University of Florida as representatives of the Carnegie Cross-Cultural Educational Program. Ten of these students were enrolled in the Elementary Education Department and the other five were enrolled in various schools and departments. Two of my colleagues and I (we are regularly teachers) were assigned as counselors and supervisors of an individual project for the ten students enrolled in Elementary Education.

Immediately after being assigned as counselors for the ten students, the three of us met in order to plan an effective program for them. We wanted to be certain that their first orientation in the School of Education was pleasant and that their classwork was properly outlined and supervised thereby, assisting them in doing quality work. At the end of the meeting, we had developed the following communications model that we felt would assist the students in accomplishing their objectives for studying at the University of Florida:



The purpose of the model was to get the students involved in activities in the homes, community and the school beginning the first week of the quarter. Additional activities were to be planned with them every week, and they were to remain in contact with the counselors once per week.

The first activity planned for the students was a dinner orientation which was held at the home of the writer. During this meeting, the model was explained and each student became acquainted with his teacher/counselor. It is understandable that the students' first reactions were those of frustration, homesickness, confusion and uncertainty as to whether they had made the correct decision to enroll at the University of Florida.

The next step in the model consisted of planning activities that were of interest and value to the students. Each student met individually with his counselor in order for the two of them to decide upon the student's project. Outlines, dates and evaluation procedures were agreed upon and the student was free to move at his own pace. In addition, they agreed that the student would remain in contact with the counselor once per week. However, the communication could be in person, writing or by any means desired by the student. The only stipulation agreed upon was that the communication must be presented in person twice per month.

The third step of the model consisted of assisting the students in meeting new friends. This aspect of the project was accomplished by introducing the new enrollees to other students in the program and especially to those students who lived in the City of Gainesville. The objective was to get them involved in community activities as soon as possible. They were invited to the homes of their new friends, attended churches of their choice and were invited to social affairs. Therefore, they were made to feel as a part of the community at large as well as a part of the school community.

The last step of the model consisted of each student completing two attitudinal questionnaires each month. Three students were assigned the responsibility of disseminating and collecting the forms from the fifteen

students. At the end of the quarter, the results of each questionnaire were compiled and discussed with the students. Listed below are the five questions that were listed on the questionnaire and a summary of the findings of each.

1. What were/are the problems you experienced at the University of Florida during your first two weeks?
2. What are some of the major problems you experienced at the University of Florida that were not experienced at Florida A&M?
3. If you could, what changes would you make at the University of Florida in order to make your visit here a more pleasant one?
4. Do you believe that a majority of your friends at A&M could achieve academic success at the University of Florida? Why?
5. Please list any thoughts that you would like to write about your visits to the University of Florida.

The first question on the survey concerned problems the students experienced during their first two weeks at the University of Florida. A major problem students encountered was finding a job. Some students felt that they had experienced no problems. The last two problems mentioned concerned relationships with white students. The Florida A&M students reported some white students closing their doors when they entered the hall. Some black students indicated they wanted to initiate conversations but were afraid the white students would "put up a front." These last two problems were experienced throughout the entire quarter, not just during the first two weeks.

The second question concerned major problems the students experienced at the University of Florida that they did not experience at Florida A&M. Seven answers were given: 1. getting a job; 2. not being assigned a job until the fourth week so students could not earn \$250 to match E.O.G. funds for the quarter; 3. being around so many white people; 4. losing black identity; 5. Blacks being more white oriented; 6. communicating with others; and 7. not getting the grade the student thought he deserved from one instructor on a research paper.

The third question asked what changes the students would make at the University of Florida to make their visit more pleasant. The following six suggestions were made: 1. cable t.v.'s placed in each room of the residence halls; 2. assign all Carnegie students a job on time so financial problems won't occur; 3. enroll more black students; 4. have teachers grade students fairly and give them the grade they earn; 5. assign the Carnegie students to rooms throughout the dormitories; and 6. do not assign Carnegie students to a room together.

Question four on the survey asked the students if the majority of their friends at A&M could achieve academic success at the University of Florida. All of the students responded positively and gave the following reasons: 1. If academic success is achieved at A&M it can be achieved anywhere; 2. The work is about the same at both schools; and 3. Friends are in Elementary Education and are motivated to study and succeed.

The final statement on the questionnaire asked for comments concerning the students' visit to the University of Florida. Some students felt that the decision to visit U. of F. was a wise one because it offered an opportunity to compete academically with whites. It gave the students confidence that they could achieve academic success on the same level with whites.

Other students commented that their visit to the U. of F. had been much greater than they had expected. Some students said that they experienced fewer problems than they had expected. They felt their visit was enjoyable, especially since there were other students from A&M.

Some students felt the Carnegie students were treated differently from black students who attended the University of Florida regularly. The Carnegie students felt they were given special treatment by teachers which they had not expected nor wanted.

Another response concerned relationships with white students. Some Carnegie students had white roommates who were cordial but did not become involved socially with them.

A final comment concerned a problem of housing which seemed to have racial overtones. It was found that the problem was caused by a misunderstanding which had nothing to do with race. (the problem was not discussed)

The fifteen students from Florida A&M University made an effective adjustment to a totally new environment. We (the counselors) believe that the model played a major role in the positive adjustment the students made. The most important aspect of the model seemed to have been the amount of time given the students by the counselors and the expectation that they were to do quality work.

Eight of the students video taped their expressions concerning the strengths and weaknesses of their experiences. The positive experiences seemed to have been concerned with the development of a positive self. The negative experiences seemed to have been concerned with money and anticipation from the students that they were to be discriminated against. It appeared that their positive experiences were greater than the negative ones.

The model, with modification, is being employed during the spring quarter '74 to assist students who are enrolled at the University from the predominately Black institutions. It appears that the students are adjusting well to their new environment.